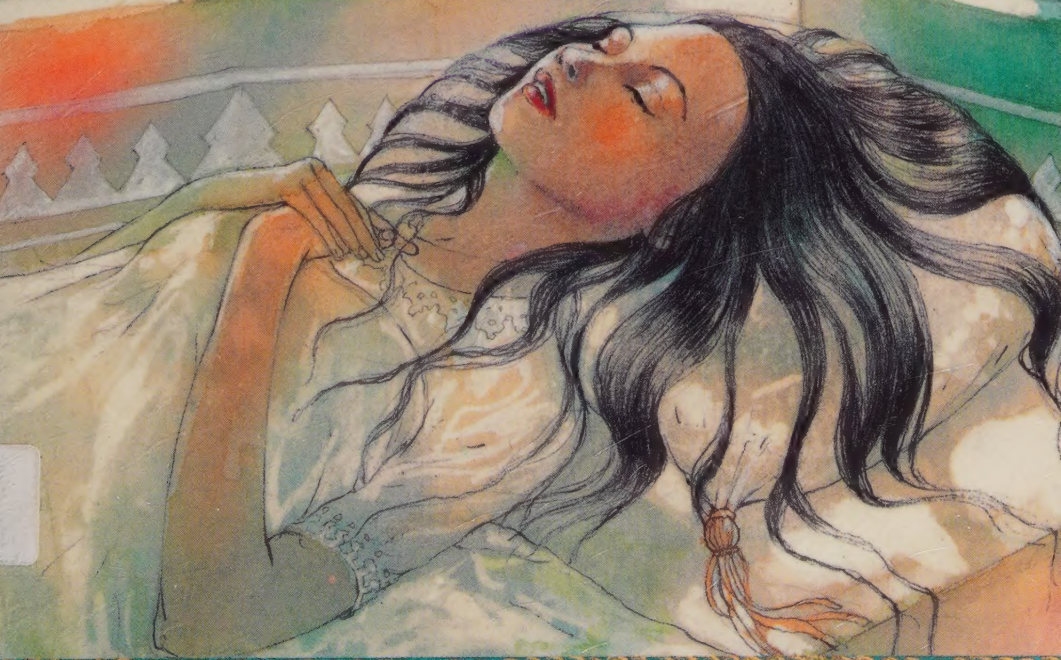


# THE GLASS PALACE

*An Arabian Fairy Tale*




*and also*  
**SLEEPING BEAUTY**



by SAVIOUR PIROTTA and ALAN MARKS

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‡ ONCE UPON A WORLD ‡

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*An Arabian Fairy Tale*



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by SAVIOUR PIROTTA  
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# *Contents*

*Once upon a time* 4

*The Glass Palace* 6

*Sleeping Beauty* 40

*Taking it further* 48



## Once upon a time

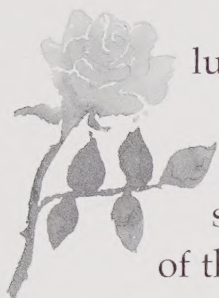
*Sleeping Beauty* is one of the most popular stories in the world and different versions of it can be found in many countries. In Europe, it was first made popular around 1636 by the Italian writer Gianbattista Basile. His tale was a big influence on the French writer Perrault and the German brothers Grimm who wrote their own versions. These two are now the most well-known.

Both these versions, and others told around the world, are full of symbols – images and events with hidden meanings. They are really about growing up, focusing on the scary process of changing from a child to an adult.

In *Sleeping Beauty*, retold at the end of this book from the tale by the brothers Grimm, the witch's curse is a symbol of the danger and pain that

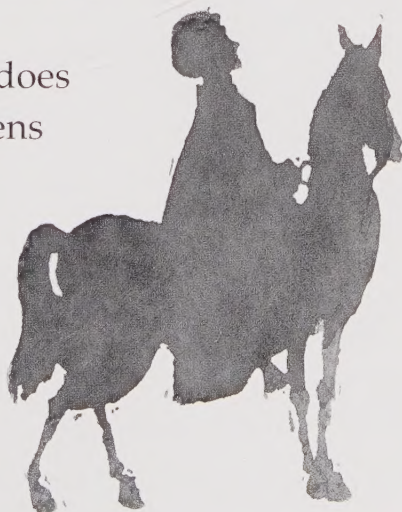






lurk through an adult's life. The king destroying all the spinning wheels in the land shows parents' attempts to shelter their children from the dangers of this world. But they cannot do this for ever. Inevitably, the princess finds the one spinning wheel left in the country. The story ends with a positive message: the princess survives the one hundred years and wakes up safe and sound – a grown-up ready to face her new life.

See if you can find any of these symbols in *The Glass Palace*. This story is from the Middle East and was first published as *The Ninth Captain's Tale* in *The Book of 1001 Nights*. Readers of *Sleeping Beauty* sometimes complain that the princess does nothing to stop what happens to her. The same cannot be said of Sittukhan, the heroine of *The Glass Palace*. Read it and see how she deals with the injustices that life throws at her.





# *The Glass Palace*

In a distant city of golden minarets, there once lived a young merchant's wife who very much wanted a child. She had been married for several years, but as hard as she wished, the cradle by her bed remained empty. Her friends gave her pitying looks and her mother-in-law complained loudly at every opportunity: 'When will I have a grandchild?' In desperation, the young woman went to see a powerful witch.

'Give me three bags of gold,' said the enchantress, 'and I'll give you a daughter as dazzling as the summer dawn.'









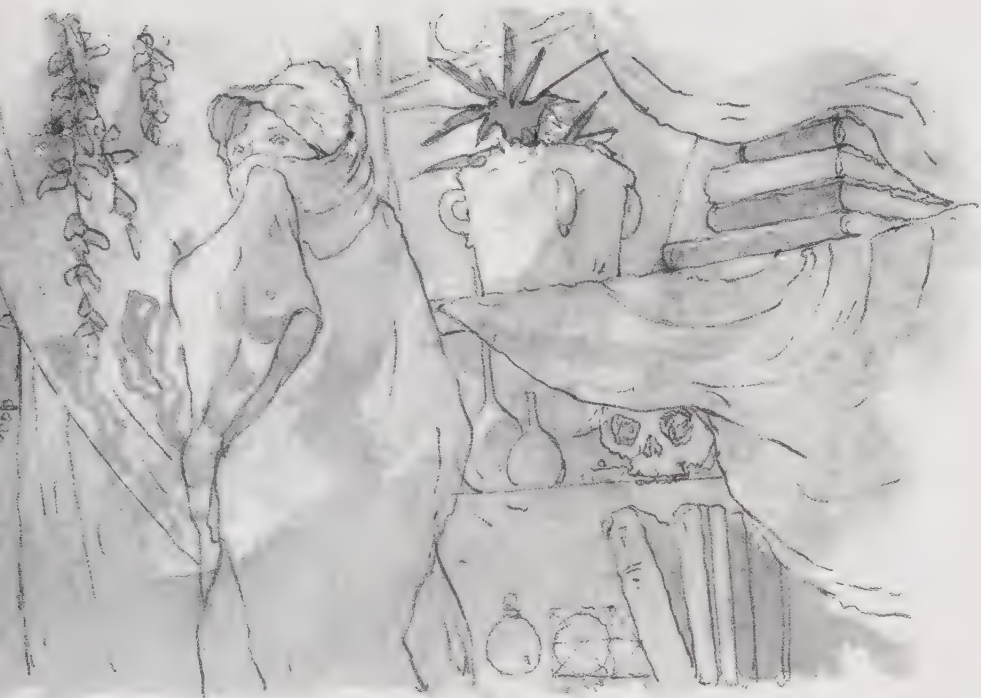
‘Alas,’ cried the merchant’s wife, ‘I do not have three bags of gold.’

‘Give me two, then,’ snapped the old woman. ‘Your girl will not be perfect for such a price but men will find her as enchanting as a nightingale.’

‘Alas,’ said the merchant’s wife, ‘I do not have two bags of gold either.’

‘Then give me one bag,’ cried the witch. ‘And the child shall only be pretty.’





‘But I have only a handful of coins,’  
sobbed the merchant’s wife.

‘For that,’ sneered the greedy enchantress,  
‘your daughter shall be truly beautiful. But  
she will have one small problem! If she so  
much as touches a piece of cotton, she will  
fall down dead.’

The young woman had no choice. She  
paid the coins and left, praying the witch  
would keep her word.

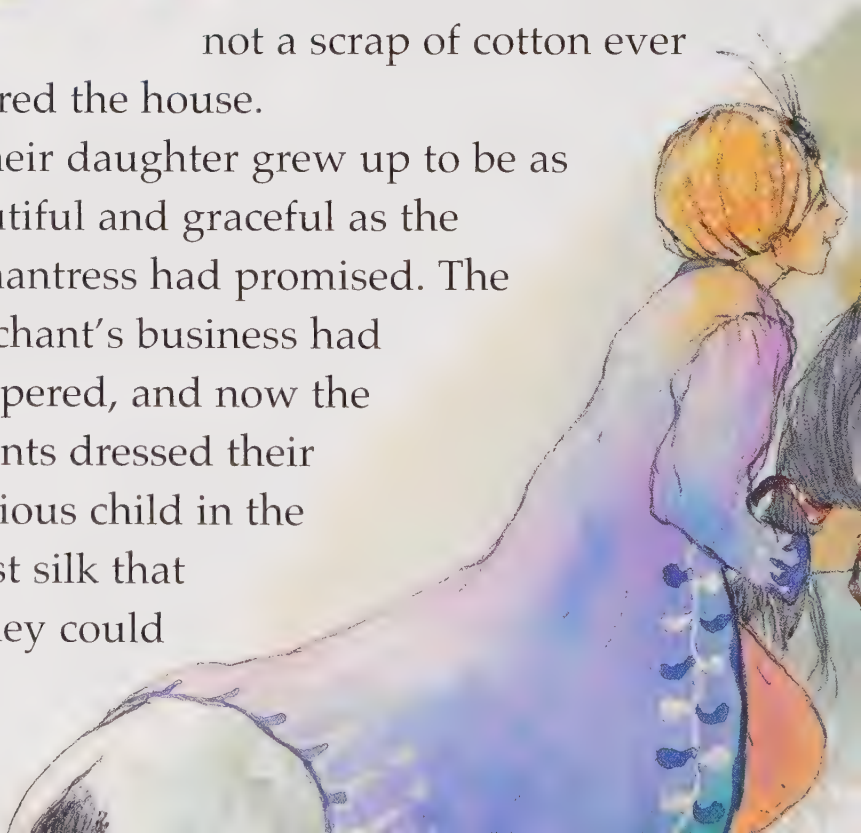


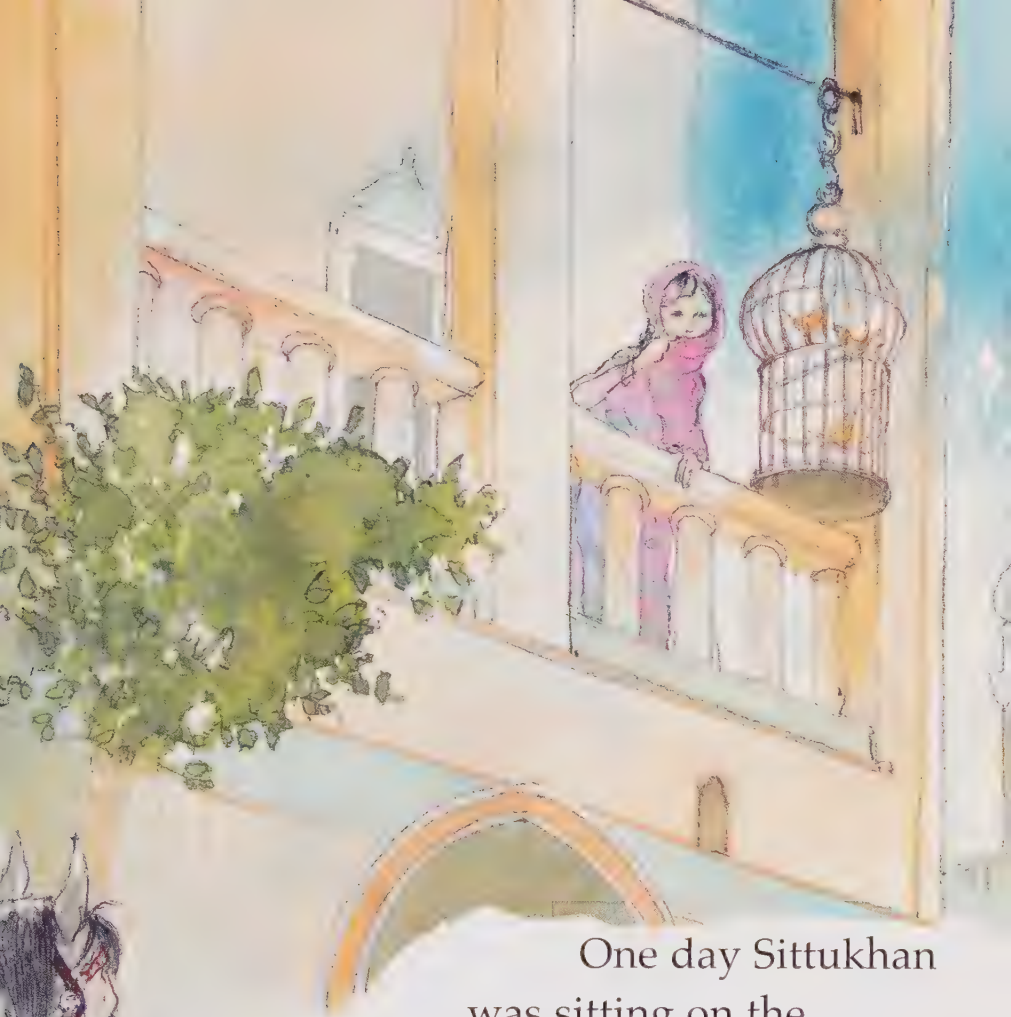


And so it seemed she did. Nine months later the merchant's wife gave birth to a girl, whom she called Sittukhan. She wrapped the child in linen and she and her husband made sure that not a scrap of cotton ever

entered the house.

Their daughter grew up to be as beautiful and graceful as the enchantress had promised. The merchant's business had prospered, and now the parents dressed their precious child in the finest silk that money could buy.





One day Sittukhan  
was sitting on the  
balcony, feeding her  
canaries, when a handsome  
young man came by on a horse.  
'Who are you?' he asked.

'My name is Sittukhan,' replied the girl,  
smiling behind her veil.

Just then the  
merchant's wife  
called from inside.  
'Come in from the  
sun, my child.'

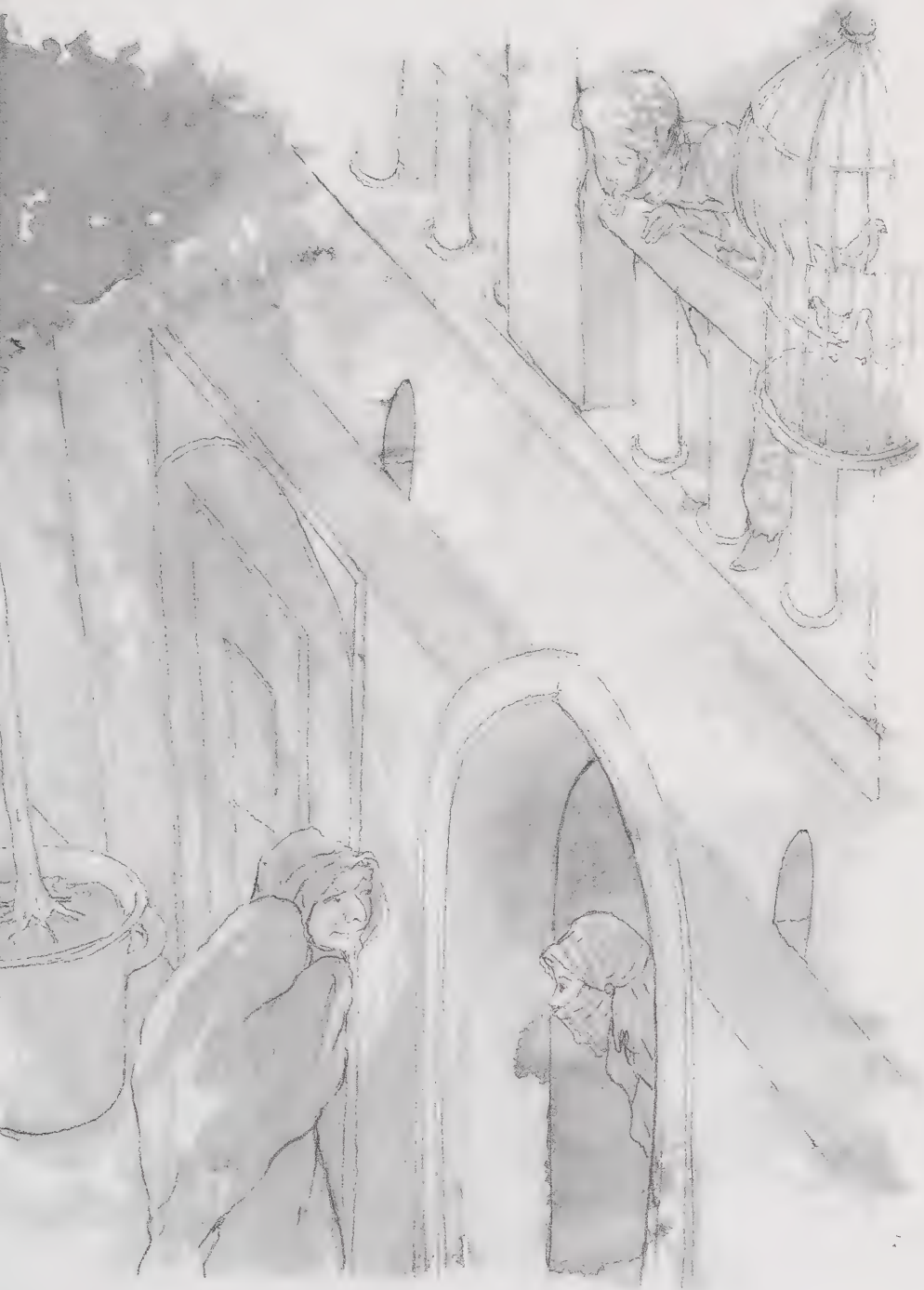
'I have to go,' said  
Sittukhan.

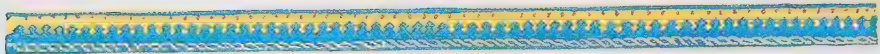
'I shall come past your  
house again next month,'  
said the young man. 'Promise me  
you will be here, waiting for me.'

'I promise,' said Sittukhan.

But the next morning she was again  
feeding her canaries when an old beggar  
knocked on the door to ask her mother for  
water. 'Why does your daughter waste her  
time looking after birds?' said the old crone.  
'All girls her age should be embroidering  
cotton sheets for their wedding chest. Why  
don't you send her to the seamstress who'll  
teach her to sew?'





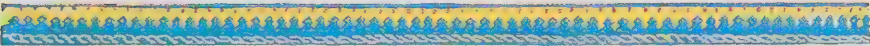


Sittukhan overheard the conversation.  
‘What is cotton?’ she asked her mother.  
‘Why have I never seen it or even heard  
of it? And why do I not learn to sew like  
other girls?’

The merchant’s wife had no choice but to  
tell her daughter all about the witch’s  
curse and why she had removed  
every scrap of cotton from  
the house.

Sittukhan did  
not believe her.



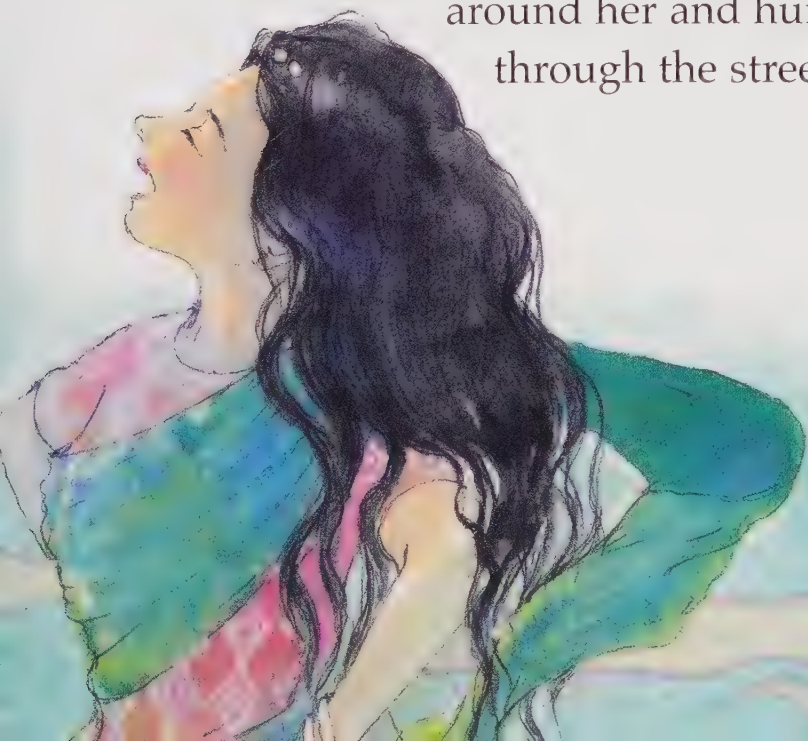


‘Pah! How could touching a piece of cloth kill you?’ she laughed. ‘The idiocies old people believe in!’

And after lunch, when her mother had fallen asleep, she slipped out of the house and asked the way to the seamstress’s workshop. She drew her silk cloak



around her and hurried through the streets.







At the workshop, Sittukhan sat on the floor with the other pupils and watched the seamstress work. How the needle seemed to fly in her expert hands, diving in and out of the material faster than the eye could see.

When the seamstress held up a robe she was sewing for a caliph, everyone gasped. It was embroidered all over with fish and



doves, and canaries just like the ones Sittukhan had on her balcony.

‘They look almost real,’ said Sittukhan and, before she knew it, she’d reached out to stroke a canary. Alas, the moment Sittukhan touched the cotton thread, the world grew dark around her. Just as the witch had predicted, she fell down dead!






Her mother and father were inconsolable. They refused to bury their beloved daughter under the ground. Instead they built her a glass palace, in the middle of a secret lake far from their city. There they laid her to rest on an ivory bed, in a chamber with her favourite poems written in gold high on the walls. All around the palace they planted a garden, full of herbs and perfumed trees.



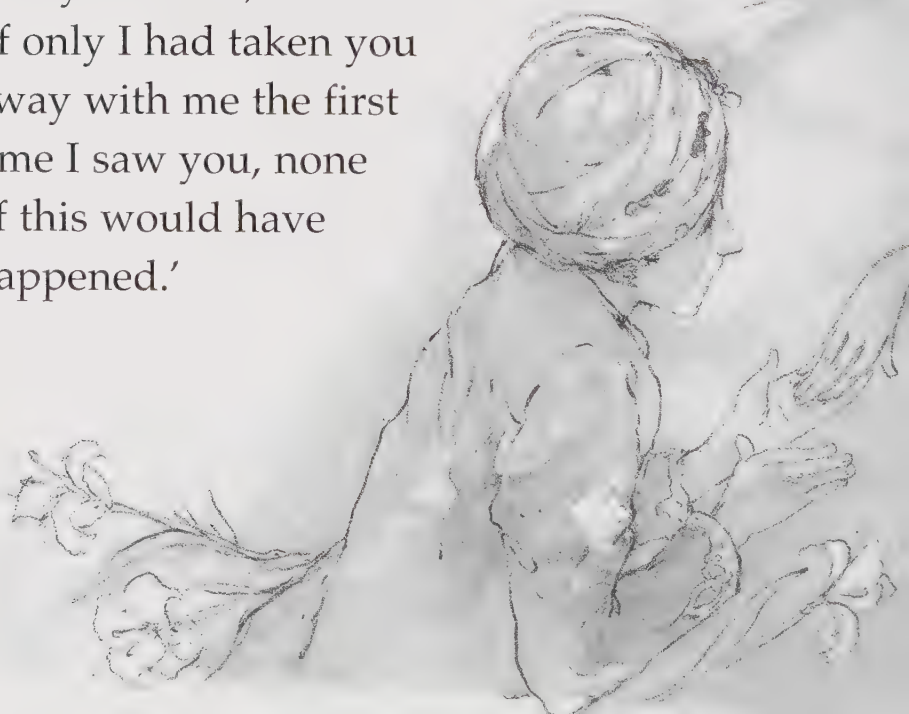
Now it so happened that the young man who had spoken to Sittukhan was a prince. When he passed by her house again a month later and found her not there, he was heartbroken. He instructed his wazir to find out where she had gone. The servant asked around the city and told his master all he heard. 'Sire, she lies dead in a glass palace, in the middle of a secret lake far away.'



The two men found the lake and rowed out to the palace. As he approached the door to Sittukhan's chamber, the prince said to the wazir, 'Wait out here for me while I pay my last respects. I shall not be long.'

He went in alone, and knelt by the bed. How beautiful Sittukhan looked in her silken robes. Her skin was still glowing, her hair still shone. The prince took her hand and kissed it over and over again.

'My beloved,' he sobbed.  
'If only I had taken you away with me the first time I saw you, none of this would have happened.'

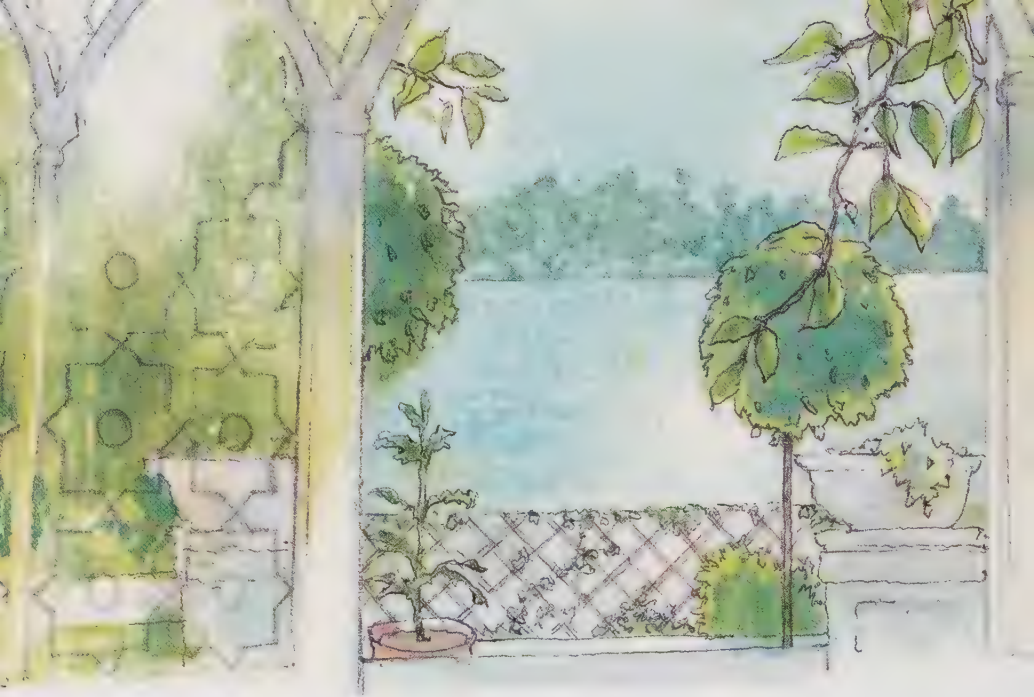


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The prince was about to kiss Sittukhan's hand again when he noticed a fragment of cotton caught behind the nail on her thumb. It had got stuck there when Sittukhan touched the caliph's cloak. Gently, he drew it out.

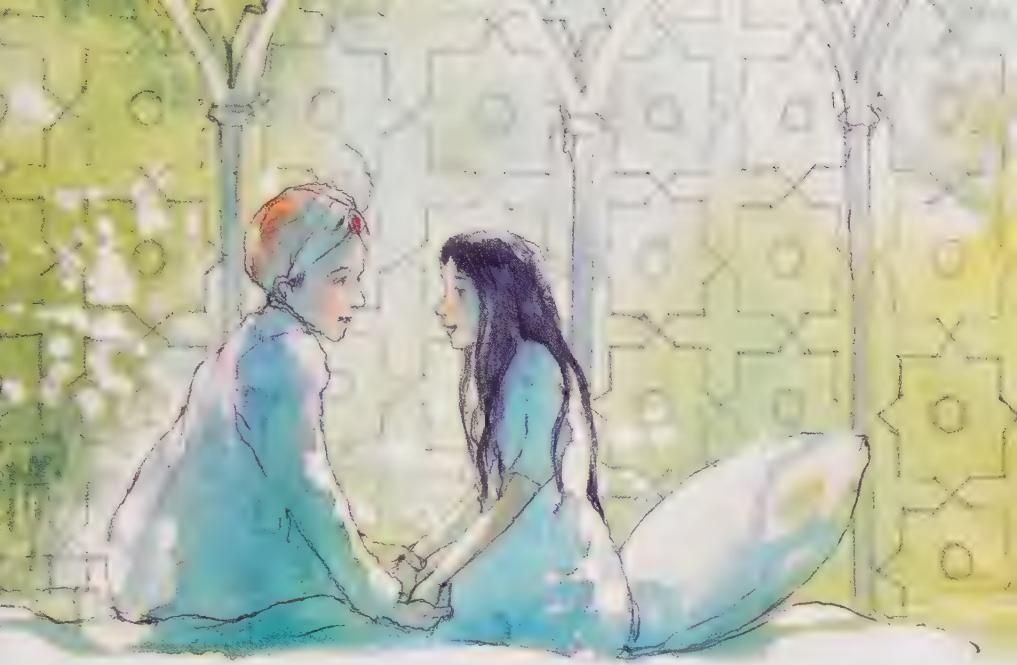






All at once Sittukhan let out a sigh and opened her eyes. 'Where am I?' she whispered.

'You are with me,' said the prince. He kissed Sittukhan on the lips and she kissed him back. The two of them stayed there, gazing into each other's eyes, for forty days and forty nights. At last the prince stirred and said, 'My wazir must be getting hungry. I'll take him back to the palace and return for you with a golden litter.'



He left the chamber but, as he was crossing the garden, he noticed a beautiful rose swaying in the breeze. 'That flower reminds me of Sittukhan's skin,' he said to himself. And he returned to the golden room, where he admired the velvety smoothness of Sittukhan's skin for another three days.





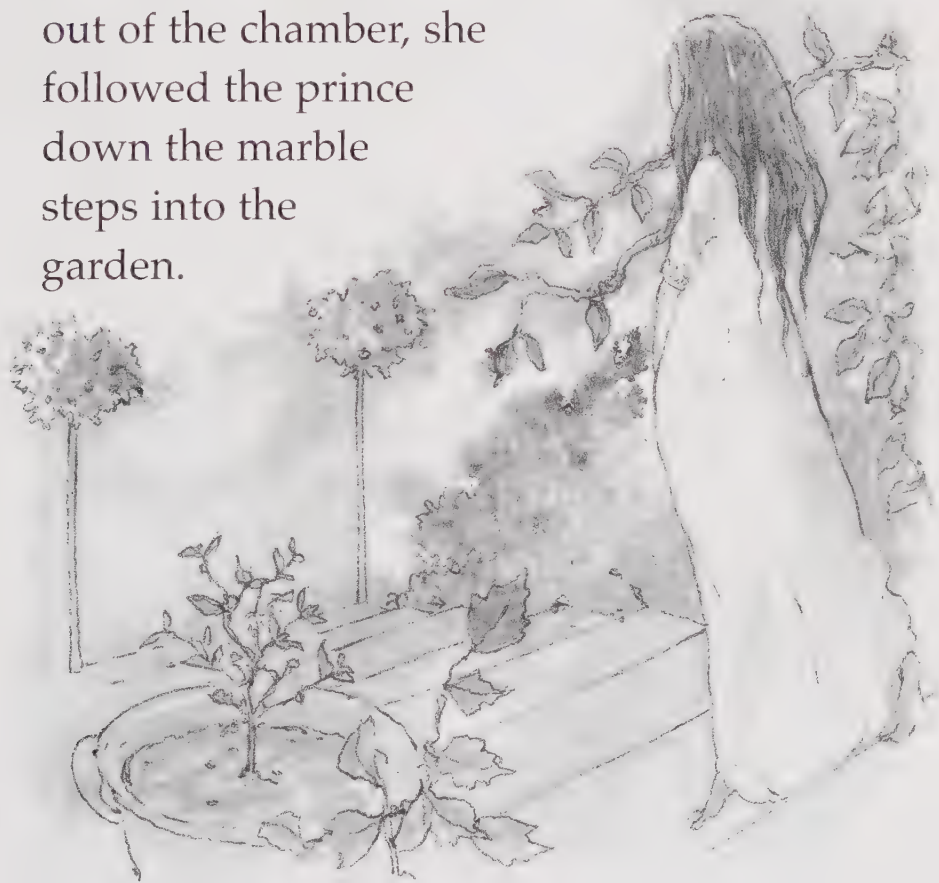
On the fourth day, he once again stood up and, promising Sittukhan he would return, left the room. This time he made it as far as the gate at the end of the garden. But, as he was opening the gate, a blackbird flew out of the bushes. 'That bird reminds me of Sittukhan's hair,' he said. And he returned to her once more, where he sat admiring the softness of her locks for another three days.



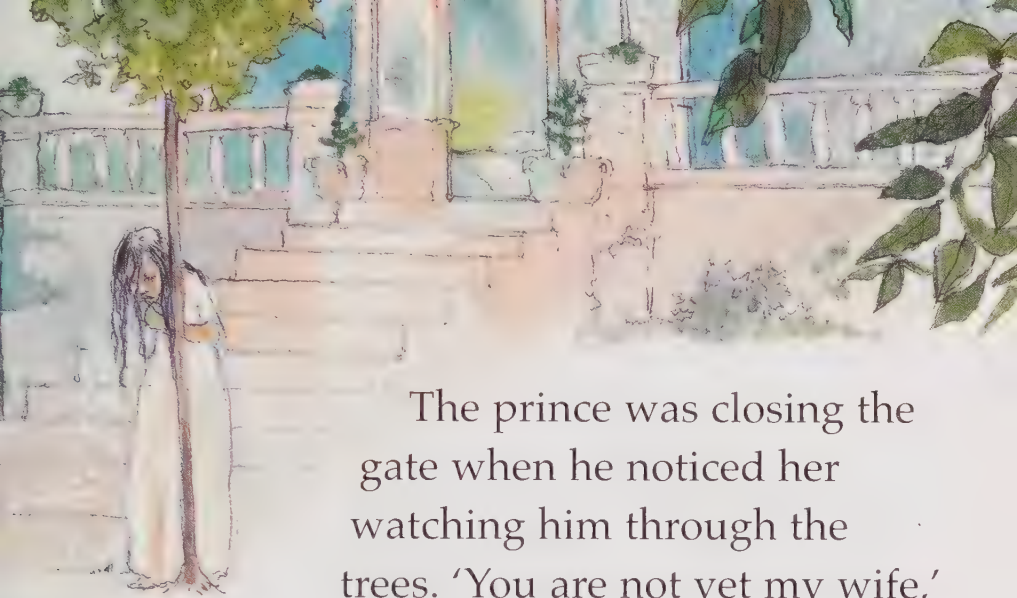
At last the wazir called out and said,  
'Sire, they will be getting worried about us  
at the palace.'

'I am coming,' answered the prince.  
He kissed Sittukhan one last time and left  
the room.

'I wonder who he is talking to?' thought  
Sittukhan. And tiptoeing  
out of the chamber, she  
followed the prince  
down the marble  
steps into the  
garden.








The prince was closing the gate when he noticed her watching him through the trees. 'You are not yet my wife,' he cried, 'but already you spy on me. You do not trust me, Sittukhan, and so I shall not return for you.' And he left without once looking back.

Halfway across the country the prince had a change of heart. How could I be so cruel to someone who loves me, he thought? And he turned back to fetch Sittukhan, but neither he nor the wazir, could find the secret lake again.



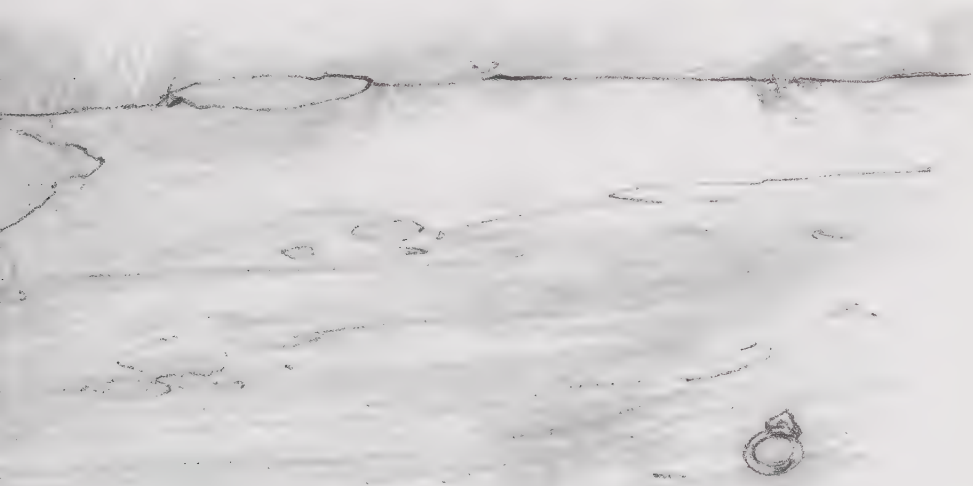




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Meanwhile, Sittukhan wandered around the glass palace, sobbing with grief. How could someone who swore he loved her leave her for such a small mistake? 'I wasn't spying on him,' she cried. 'I only wanted to know who his friend was. Oh, I wish I was really dead.'

She was about to throw herself in the lake when she noticed something sparkling in the water. It was a golden ring, with a scarlet diamond on top. Sittukhan rubbed it against her arm to clean it.







In a flash of red smoke, a genie appeared in front of her. 'Speak, mortal,' he bellowed. 'Your wish is my command.'

'I desire a marble palace right next to that of the prince,' said Sittukhan.

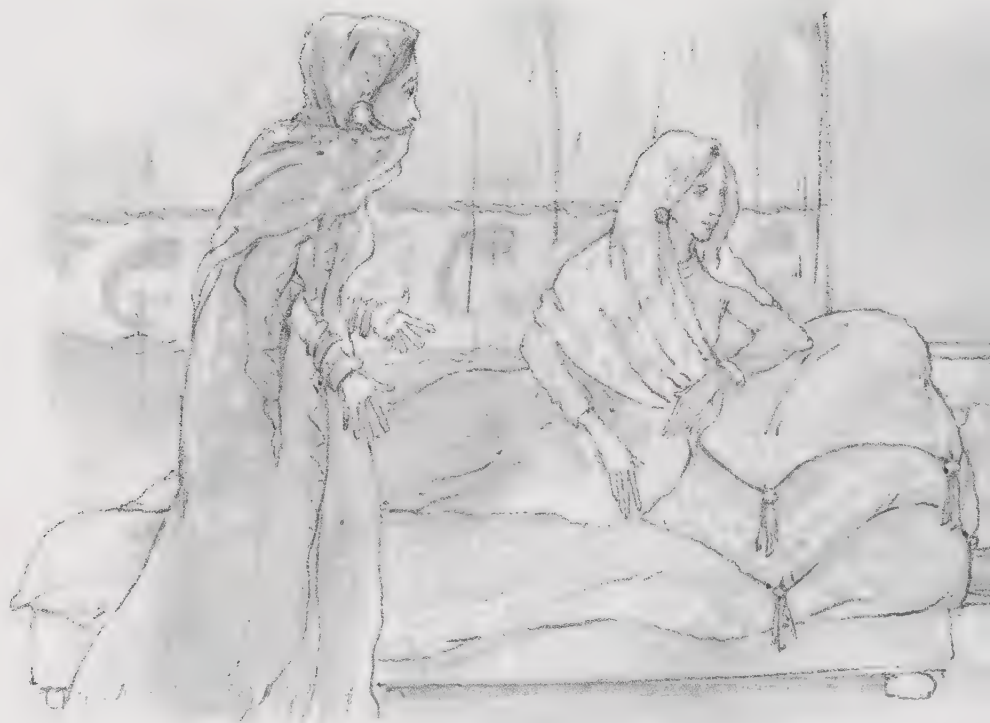
'Shut your eyes,' ordered the genie.

Sittukhan obeyed and, when she opened her eyes again, she was standing in a marble palace. She called for her servants and they put on her face a silken veil hung around with golden coins.

Sittukhan leaned out of the window and, some time later, saw the prince returning home on his horse.

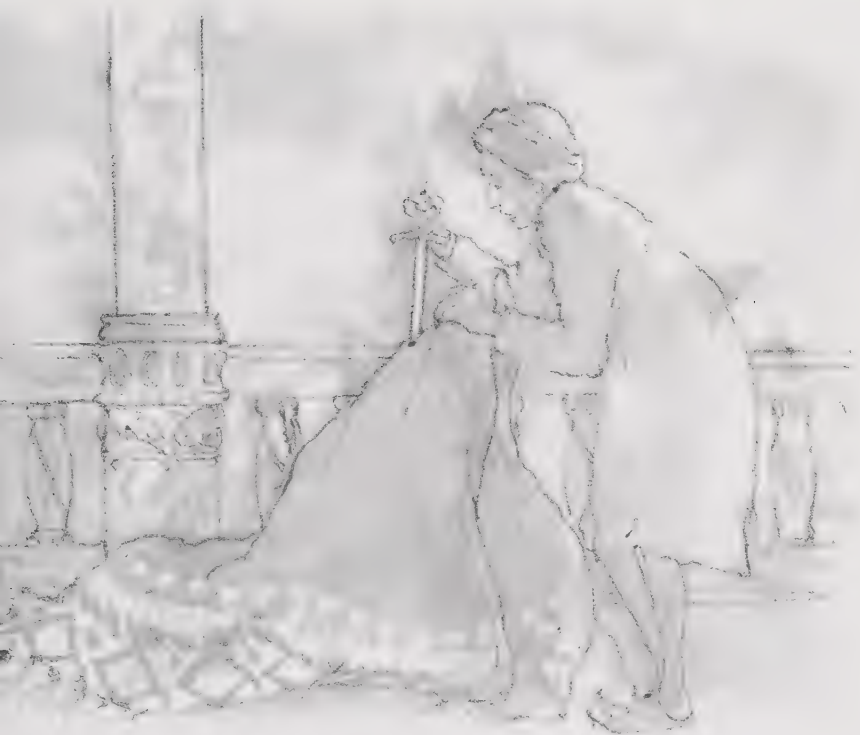
The prince looked up and saw her too. He had no idea who she was but her beautiful eyes reminded him of Sittukhan, whom he missed very much.





When he reached his palace, the prince called for his mother. 'Take the young woman next door a gift,' he commanded. 'I want to marry her.'

That very same afternoon, the queen presented herself to Sittukhan and gave her a priceless rug. 'My son sends you a gift as a token of his love,' she said. 'Take it and accept his hand in marriage.'



Sittukhan thanked the prince's mother, then called one of her servants. 'Tear this rag up into floor cloths,' she ordered.

The servant obeyed, cutting the rug into pieces right in front of the queen.

'The girl must be so rich, your gift was an insult to her,' said the prince when his mother returned home. 'Take her something better.'





The queen went back to Sittukhan's palace with a jade necklace.

Once again, Sittukhan accepted the gift but called her servant. 'Throw these peas to the pigeons,' she ordered.

When the queen saw the servant scattering the beads in the garden, she said, 'What will my son have to do to prove his love for you?'



Sittukhan answered, 'If he truly loves me, let him be wrapped in seven shrouds of white linen. Then carry him through the streets in a black litter. At night, bring him to my garden where my servants will bury him alive in a marble tomb.'





The queen said to  
the prince, 'Forget her.  
Her price is too terrible  
to pay.'

'I have already lost one  
beloved,' said the prince, 'I shall  
not make the same mistake twice.'  
And right there and then he fell to the  
floor and closed his eyes as if he were  
dead. His body was wrapped in seven  
sheets of linen and carried on a litter  
through the streets of the city. His mother  
followed the funeral procession, tearing her  
shawl and wailing.





At night the prince was set down in  
Sittukhan's garden, outside the marble  
tomb. When the mourners had left,  
Sittukhan came out dressed as one of her  
servants, with her veil drawn across her  
face. She unwrapped the sheets  
one by one until the prince  
was free.





‘You must be very much in love with my mistress if you are willing to be buried alive for her,’ she said.

‘I am,’ said the prince.

‘But how long will your love last this time?’ asked Sittukhan. ‘How long will it be before she makes a small mistake and you throw her out?’



'I shall never leave her,' cried the prince. 'I have lost one I loved before and I never will again.'

'In that case,' said Sittukhan. 'I accept your hand in marriage.' And she removed her veil so that the prince might recognise her.

'It is you, my Sittukhan!' he cried. 'I shall never

betray you again. I promise on my mother's heart.'

And he and Sittukhan remained there, gazing into each other's eyes for forty days and forty nights. And it is said that, when they got married, there was not a happier couple in all the world.







# Sleeping Beauty


*This version of Sleeping Beauty was made famous by the brothers Grimm, who first published it in 1812. They called their story Briar-rose, the name of the sleeping princess. It appeared in their Nursery and Household Tales, a collection of folk stories the brothers had been told as they travelled around Germany.*

A long time ago there were a king and queen who had no children. But it happened that once, when the queen was bathing, a frog crept out of the water on to the land, and



said to her, 'Your wish shall be fulfilled; soon you shall have a daughter.'

What the frog said came true and the queen had a little girl. The king could not contain himself for joy, and ordered a feast. He invited not only his relatives and friends, but also the wise women, so that they might give his child

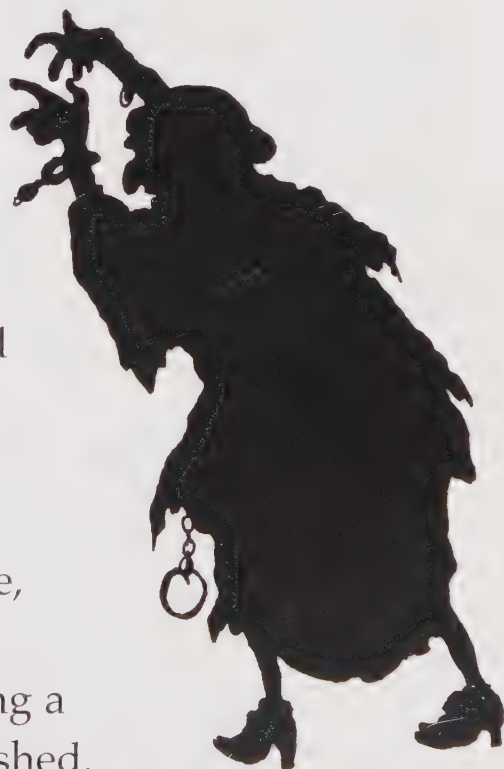



magic gifts. There were thirteen of them in his kingdom, but, as he had only twelve golden plates, the eldest was left out.

At the feast the wise women bestowed their magic gifts upon the baby: one gave virtue, another beauty, a third riches, and so on, with everything in the world that she could wish for.


When eleven of them had made their promises, suddenly the thirteenth came in. She cried with a loud voice, 'The king's daughter shall in her fifteenth year prick herself with a spindle, and fall down dead.'

And, without saying a word more, she vanished.






Then the twelfth wise woman, whose good wish still remained unspoken, came forward and said, 'It shall not be death, but a deep sleep of a hundred years, into which the princess shall fall.'



The king, who was determined to keep his child safe, ordered every spindle in the kingdom to be burnt. Meanwhile the gifts of the wise women were fulfilled. The princess grew up to be beautiful, modest, good-natured and wise.

Now it happened that on the day when she was fifteen years old, the king and queen were not at home, and the princess was left to play on her own. So she went round looking into rooms she had not been in before.





At last she came to an old tower. Climbing up the narrow, winding staircase and reaching a little door, she opened it to find an old woman spinning flax in a room.

‘Good day,’  
said the  
princess.  
‘What are  
you doing?’



‘I am spinning,’ said the old woman.

‘What sort of thing is that, rattling round so merrily?’ asked the girl, and she reached out for the spindle.

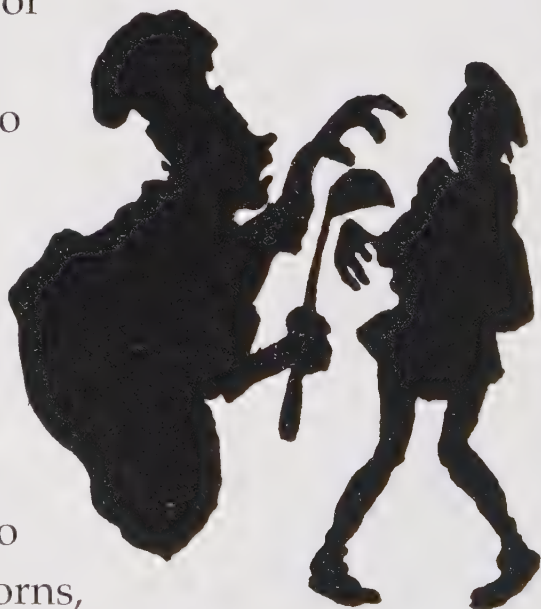
Scarcely had she touched it when she  
pricked her finger with  
its pointed end. All at  
once she fell down  
upon a bed and lay  
there in a deep sleep.



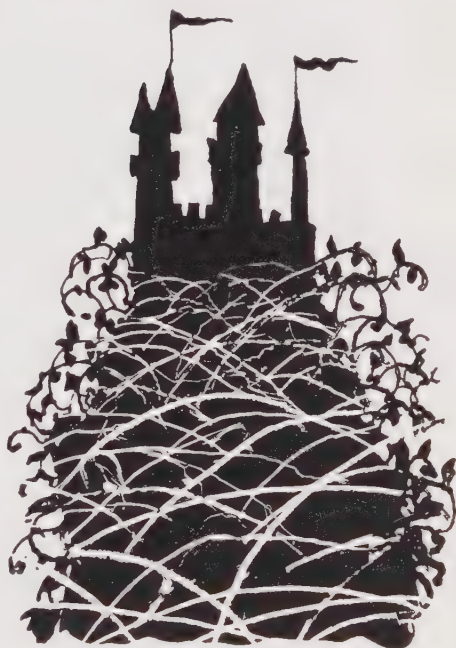


And this sleep extended over the whole castle: the king and queen, who had just come home, fell asleep and the whole of the court with them. The horses, too, went to sleep in the stable, the dogs in the yard, the pigeons upon the roof, the flies on the wall; even the fire that was flaming in the grate became quiet and slept and the roast meat left off frizzling. The cook, who was reaching for the scullery boy to box his ears, went to sleep. And the wind fell, and on the trees before the castle not a leaf moved again.

Round about the castle there began to grow a hedge of thorns, which every year became higher and thicker




until it had covered it completely. But the story of the beautiful sleeping 'Briar-rose', for so the princess was named, went about the country, so that from time to time kings' sons came and tried to get through the thorny hedge into the castle.



They found it impossible, for the thorns held fast together, as if they had hands, and the youths were caught in them and died a miserable death.

After many years a king's son came again to that country, and heard an old man talking about the thorn-hedge, and that a castle was said to stand behind it in which a beautiful princess had been asleep for a hundred years.





By this time the hundred years had just passed, and the day had come when Briar-rose was to awake again.



When the king's son came near to the thorn-hedge, it was nothing but large and beautiful flowers, which let

him pass unhurt. In the castle he saw everyone and everything asleep, even the cook in the kitchen with his hand still out to seize the boy.

He went farther into the castle and came to the tower stairs. He climbed them and opened the door into the little room where Briar-rose was sleeping. There she lay, so beautiful that he could not turn his eyes away. He stooped down and gave her a kiss.





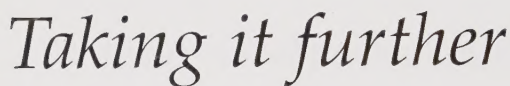
In that instant, Briar-rose awoke, and looked lovingly at the king's son. The two went down stairs together as the king and queen awoke and with them the whole court.



The horses in the stable stood up and shook themselves; the hounds jumped up; the pigeons upon the roof pulled out their heads from under their wings; the flies on the wall crept again; the fire in the kitchen burned up and flickered; the joint began to frizzle again; and the cook gave the boy such a box on the ear that he screamed.

And then the marriage of the king's son with Briar-rose was celebrated with all splendour, and they lived contented to the end of their days.





Once you've read both stories in this book, there is lots more you can think and talk about. There's plenty to write about, too.

- For starters, think about what is the same and what is different about the two stories. Talk about these with other people. Which story do you prefer and why?
- Imagine you were organising a christening or a naming ceremony for a relative. Make a detailed guest list. Who would you invite to the feast and who would you leave out? Why?
- Rewrite one of the stories in a modern setting, perhaps placing yourself in the main role. How would your plot differ from the old ones, and why? Would your princess behave in the same way as Sittukhan or Briar-rose?
- Draw up plans for Sittukhan's and Briar-rose's palaces. How would they be different? You need to think about the materials used, the furniture, decorations and even the garden design.









# Once upon a World

*All over the world, for thousands of years, people have been telling fairy tales – full of magic, romance and adventure.*

*ONCE UPON A WORLD brings together two stories from this rich global heritage that are strikingly alike but from different parts of the world: the first little known, the second an old favourite.*

*THE GLASS PALACE is an Arabian fairy tale.*

*It is retold alongside SLEEPING*

*BEAUTY because both are*

*about young girls*

*caught in a death-like slumber.*



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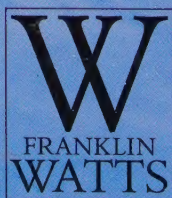
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